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In 1774

Westmoreland was a County
without the limits of Pennsylvania
in the upper Susquehanna settled
and organized under the jurisdiction
of Connecticut — the seat of the
County in Wyoming

A

NARRATIVE

Of the CAPTURE

Of certain AMERICANS,

At *Weſtmoreland*,

By SAVAGES;

And the perilous ESCAPE which they effected, by ſurprizing Specimens of Policy and Heroiſm.

To which is ſubjoined,

Some Account of the Religion, Government, Cuſtoms, and Manners of the Aborigines of NORTH-AMERICA.

New-London: Printed by T. Green, 1784.

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ON hearing a particular Account of the Capture of certain Americans at Weſtmoreland on the Suſquehannah, and the ſurprizing Eſcape which they effected, by riſing upon and vanquiſhing their ſavage Captors, my Mind was ſo ſtruck with the rare Specimens of Enterprize, Bravery, and Conduct which were exhibited in theſe little Adventures, that I preſently projected the Publication thereof, though the Narration is worthy of an abler Pen.

Lm.
11/4/54

A Narrative, &c.

THE ſavages who occaſioned the following ſcenes, were ſent from the Britiſh garriſon at Niagara, ſome time in the fore part of March, A. D. 1780, through a deep ſnow, on a wretched ſkulking indian expedition, againſt a few ſcattering people which they hoped to find about Suſquehannah; eſpecially thoſe who were making ſugar in the woods at that time of the year.

The number of indians which ſkulked about Weſtmoreland at this time, was 16: whether they all came from Niagara in company and ſeparated in the vicinity, or were ſeparate parties from Niagara, I never could learn: but they appeared about Weſtmoreland in two parties of ſix and ten indians in different parts of the country; the party of 10 appeared the next day after the party of ſix.

I will give a narrative of each in their turns.

The party of ten indians, after lurking about the ſettlement for ſome time, firſt made their appearance on Tueſday the 28th of March, at break of day, five miles below Plymouth ſettlement, where ſundry people were ſcattered about making maple ſugar, which is known to be a profitable branch of buſineſs here as in many parts of America: the manufacturers frequently build a little hut near a maple grove, and continue boiling all night. In one of theſe huts was a Mr. Upſon, and Jonah Rogers, a lad 13 years of age, they watched with the ſugar boiling by turns; and at day-breaking Upſon having finiſhed his watch, was reclined on the floor a-ſleep, and Jonah was up, and at this time amuſing himſelf in ſome trifles; when to his ſurprize, a ſavage ſuddenly entered the hut, and immediately fired his piece through the bowels of Upſon, and with his tomahawk ſplit out his brains; a ſecond of theſe frightful ſemi-painted dæmons immediately entered, and ſeized Jonah by the arm, when the whole gang preſently ruſhed into the hut, with their ſhocking painted viſages and ſavage ſhoutings, upon the devoted Jonah, to whoſe affrighted mind they preſented

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the utmoſt horrors of inſtant death, heightned by a glaring repreſentation of the infernal pit: they gave him to underſtand by their jargon dialect, which he partly underſtood, that he muſt go with them; which in his preſent view was but the more wretched alternative of inſtant death. He had no way to vent his horror but by immoderate crying, which the ſavages ſuppreſs'd by menaces of death; he then fell to ſupplicating them with all his might, for liberty to go home; but theſe intreaties alſo the ſavages ſuppreſs'd by the ſame threats as before: thus the lad, advanced far enough in life to anticipate the horrors of ſavage cruelty and captivity, yet too young to ſhare the full fortitude of manhood, not ſuffered to vent his horror by crying, nor daring to beg for relief from his inexorable maſters, and not a mortal with whom to confer or condole, he was fix'd in a plethory of grief and deſpair, while the ſavages performed their deteſtable cuſtom, by taking off the ſcalp of Mr. Upſon.

The ſavages next proceed down the river, to a place called Fiſhing-Creek; where on Wedneſday they ſurpriz'd and took Meſſi. Peter Pence, Moſes Van Campen, and a lad named Moſes Van Campen, nephew to the former. They continued lurking about until Friday, when they diſcovered ſome ſugar works where the kettles were boiling; they concluded that the people had hid themſelves near by, whom they catch'd by the following ſtratagem: they obliged the priſoners to halloo, and call them out as if they all were friends; this had the effect propoſed, and brought out a Mr. Pike, with his wife and child; the man they retained as a priſoner, but the woman and child they ſpared, for the ſake of gratifying a humour of painting them in the Indian manner, which they performed, and then ſent them home.

I may here obſerve, that I don't remember to have heard an inſtance of theſe ſavages offering to violate the chaſtity of any of the fair ſex who have fallen into their hands; this is principally owing to a natural inappetancy in their conſtitutions; which circumſtance, were it otherwiſe, and were they equally nefarious in this, as in their other violations of the laws of nature and humanity, it would render their depredations, if poſſible, much more demoniack than they are. This is an inſtance, among numberleſs, which an obſerving

mind

mind may perceive, where the wise Creator of all, in his assignments of passions, powers and properties, has ballanced and sorted those matters in a manner worthy of himself.

The savages being now in possession of five prisoners, viz. Messrs. Pence, Van Campen, Pike, young Van Campen, 17 years of age, and Jonah Rogers, 13 years old, together with a number of blankets, and a quantity of sugar and indian meal, which they had plundered in the sugar-huts, which was all the provision they had, they, without delay, shaped their course for Niagara They usually marched about 15 miles in a day. The lad Jonah, after being joined by the other prisoners, recovered his spirits, and being somewhat humorous, rendered himself a great favorite of the savages. The prisoners were miserably scanted in their allowance of provisions, but Jonah grew bold and familiar, and had the address to get as much as he pleased of any thing that the savages had; some of which he usually imparted secretly to his fellow prisoners, who were half starved, and obliged to stagger along with all the baggage of the whole party, which was very heavy; and what rendered their duty doubly burthensome, the snow was up to their knees every step they trod, and all the chance any of them had for their lives, was from continuing this intolerable route, 300 miles, to Niagara, without any relief or refreshment, excepting the hope of the savages taking venison, or other game by the way; and to render their condition completely desperate, the indians, whose savage tempers cannot be sufficiently gorged, simply by the blood of their victims, but are greatly delighted in frequently reminding them of their approaching tortures, impoliticly informed the prisoners that they were to be kept alive for the purpose of carrying the baggage, until they had marched well toward Niagara, and then they should feel the tomahawk, and their scalps, not themselves, be carried into Niagara; which sentence, it was expected, would be put into execution, at least on some of them, especially on Mr. Pike, of whom they were apprehensive, on account of his having been a continental soldier.

In these desperate circumstances, it is easy to conceive, that people would be led to meditate, if possible, some way of escape; to save themselves by flight, was impracticable, as the savages were fleeter than themselves, and would pursue with

fire

fire arms, with fatal effect on the fugitives; the only chance was to rise by night, disarm and attack the savages: but if we consider that the prisoners had their hands carefully secured behind them both night and day, and carefully deprived of any utensil that might be used to seperate their ligatures; and that the enemy were active and watchful, and more than double in number to those who were able to assist in such an enterprize; and that the cruelest death that savages could inflict, would be practiced on them, in case their plot should be discovered, or miscarry; I say, if we consider these things, we may form some idea of the bravery, or rather desperation which inspired such an attempt. Some one of them first projected the enterprize, and when they had opportunity of conference on the march, the proposal was made to the rest, who all concurred on the first motion, without the least reluctance or hesitation in any one of them; and on the next Friday after they began their march, they resolved to put the plan into execution the ensuing night. They faithfully promise each other by all the ties of honour and common calamity, to stand by each other, and abide the combat, if fate so required, even to the spending their last drops of blood. Their plan expressly agreed on, was as follows: each one was to watch his opportunity, if possible, to possess himself of some instrument, wherewith to separate the cords which tied his hands behind him, and if any one should be so fortunate as to secure an instrument, he was at night, when the indians were well asleep, to cut himself loose, and then liberate the others himself, or reach the instrument to his nearest fellow, as he should judge safest, and so to be handed, if possible, until all were loose; this done, each one was, with the utmost address, dexterity and stillness, to secure such arms and ammunition, as were most contiguous to him, and nimbly repair therewith to a certain spot of rendezvous, about two rods distant from where they couched by the side of a fire; when, if leisure should permit, they were farther to consult on the particular mode of attack. and to assign to each man his duty, or in whatever stage of the plot after they were loose, the savages might take the alarm, each man was to catch some weapon, and without giving the savages a moment's time to recover from their consternation, were to attack them with all fury, and at once put the mat-

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ter to a final iſſue. But when night came on, no one had been able to ſecure any kind of tool, wherewith to cut himſelf looſe; they however, when the ſavages were aſleep, ſtruggled and ſtrove to get their hands at liberty; but all in vain. The night paſſed without effecting any thing, and happily without exciting the leaſt ſuſpicion.

On Saturday it was agreed at all events to bring matters to a criſis the enſuing night; they all as one declared they would march no farther toward Niagara. By Saturday night they had marched 75 miles; their lodging was as follows: after erecting a fire, they ſpread down their blankets, of which they now had ſuch a plenty as to afford them a comfortable bed and covering. One circumſtance worthy of notice in this place is, that the ſavages were ſo infeſted with lice, that they could not ſleep quietly with their cloaths on, and this being a cold night, they ſtript off even their ſhirts, and expoſed them on ſome buſhes to freeze, in order to thin the lice; whence it happened, that when they turned out in the alarm at midnight, they were ſtark naked. Pike had obſerved that the indian whom he was taught to call his maſter, when he went to ſleep, laid his knife under his body, which he poſſeſſed himſelf of by the following art: pretending a great fondneſs for his ſaid maſter, he begged the favour of ſleeping at night by his ſide, and had the dexterity when the indians were aſleep, to extract the knife unperceived, wherewith he ſoon cut himſelf looſe. Mr. Pence likewiſe being allowed a knife at ſupper time, inſtead of returning it, drop'd and covered it in a certain place by the couch; and when the indians demanded his knife, he pretended that it had been ſurrendered up, and ſo it paſſed over; and when the ſavages were aſleep, he reſumed his knife, and cut himſelf looſe; and by means of theſe two knives, all the priſoners were ſoon at liberty, excepting Jonah, whom it was thought beſt not to awake; every one, as ſoon as poſſible, got hold of ſome kind of weapon, expecting every moment the ſavages would be upon their legs, give the yell of war, and commence a violent attack, with the inequality of 10 to 4; but ſtill they ſlept. One grand object was ſecuring the fire arms: thoſe were all ſet againſt a tree at the head of the couch, and were preſently removed to a place appointed, about two rods diſtant, by the ſide of a tree. Some ammunition they likewiſe

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fecured, with which they even had leiſure to prime their pieces, which the indians, previous to their lying down, had cautiouſly unprimed. Thus in the ſpace of a few lucky moments, theſe four men, with the moſt cautious dexterity, deprived 10 ſavages, not only of their fire arms, but nearly of all their tomahawks, removed them to the ſpot aſſigned, and after a haſty, but very wiſe and prudent conſultation, it was reſolved that two men ſhould ſtand by the guns, and fire upon the ſavages as they aroſe up, and during the conflict; the other two men took each a tomahawk, and with undaunted bravery, advanced to the couch where the 10 indians lay, In order to commence the attack, one on each ſide of the couch; they uncovered the indians heads, and with an unerring blow, each ſtruck his tomahawk into the brains of an indian, killing both in an inſtant; the other 8 indians ſprang up the ſame moment, and at once perceived that their arms were not only taken from them, but fatally turned againſt themſelves, and moved by that cowardly qualm which naturally riſes in boſoms that delight in cruelty, they ſcampered off as quick as they aroſe, without giving the two men time to give a ſecond blow. The two men who ſtood by the guns, ſaluted the indians as they aroſe, and purſued them as they fled with the ſame ſalutation, as far as their naked precipitation would permit; they ſorely wounded ſome, which appeared from a profuſion of blood which they ſprinkled on the ſnow as they fled: the ſnow at this time had a hard cruſt, yet not ſo ſtrong but that they broke through almoſt every ſtep; this had a ſad opperation on their naked ſhins, which their preſent trouble and haſte would not permit them to take any care of: ſome ſmall defence for their legs in this race would have afforded them no ſmall comfort, as they were obliged to abandon them to the cruſt, which mangled them moſt pitifully, which appeared the next morning by numberleſs fragments of fleſh and ſkin, which they left by their tracks, many of which were as big as dollars. Jonah being aſleep with the indians, ſtarted in ſurprize and confuſion, and run off with them a few rods, but recollecting the plan to which he had been privy, he leaped back to the company; Pike humouroufly gave him a cuff on the ear, ſaying, what you raſcal, you was going to run off with the indians? They were now all enraptured with their deliverance and victory, which was

every

every way compleat, equal or even ſuperior to the utmoſt ſtretch of their fancy and fond wiſhes. Their joy was mixed with aſtoniſhment at ſo rare and ſurprizing an event; which ſo dazzled their imaginations, that they could ſcarcely believe and realize facts, ſupported by the inſtant teſtimony of all their ſenſes. How great and ſudden was their change of circumſtances! From the ſevereſt ſufferings, and the moſt ill-boding apprehenſions of extremeſt woe under ſavage captivity, by a bold and manly execution of a wiſe concerted plan, they, in the ſpace of a few minutes, vanquiſhed the whole party of ſavages, ſo ſuperior in number, that they deemed it needleſs to keep a guard; poſſeſſed themſelves of their effects, and completely regained their liberty.

It was practiced in antient times, even by heathen writers, in caſes of ſignal deliverance, to aſcribe the efficiency thereof to the power of Deity; and it would be unpardonable in an American, at a day of ſuch ſtriking manifeſtations of divine patronage, not to aſcribe to the auſpicious providence of Deity, not only the more general and important ſpecimens of aid, but every ſubordinate inſtance, and in ſpecial the preſent. Who can conceive, that men, without ſpecial aſſiſtance, could ariſe in the night, in ſuch an attempt againſt ſuch ſuperior numbers of indians, who are alert and vigilant, and ever jealous in the extreme, cut themſelves looſe, ſecure the arms, and perform all the neceſſary tranſactions, moving about on the ſnow, crumping around their ears, without arouſing thoſe infernal dogs; and then, that they ſhould inſtantly vanquiſh them, without a conflict, when they could but know, that naked and deſtitute they muſt inevitably and miſerably freeze and ſtarve, ſhort of reaching any relief which proved in fact to be their awful fate, their guilty conſciences ſufficiently remonſtrating againſt turning about and ſubmitting to the mercy of their victors. They probably ſet their faces toward Niagara, 230 miles diſtant, without arms, or a ſcrap of cloathing or food, and have never been heard of ſince, which occaſioned great mournings at Niagara, as ſome priſoners inform. It is probable that the operation of famine and froſt, landed thoſe wretches, one after another, on a bed of ſnow, where they left the world, literally as naked as they came into it. Their horrid fate had it fallen to the ſhare even of wild beaſts, ought to have moved compaſſion in every humane breaſt; but when we conſider how richly

thoſe monſters merited their fate by the moſt unprovoked, needleſs, and voluntary hoſtilities, proſecuted with the moſt wanton ſtretches of inhumanity and guilt, it moderates the pang of ſympathy, and conſtrains the minds of the compaſſionate, in ſome meaſure, to acquieſce in the providential exerciſe of thoſe puniſhments, which humane nature could not bare to inflict on the moſt accummulated guilt.

Our people ſpent the remaining part of the night very agreeably by the fire ſide, without any fear of the vanquiſhed ſavages. The booty which the indians left, was more than they could bring home, which determined them to make a raft of timber on the Suſquehannah, in order to tranſport themſelves, with their effects down the river; but this unluckily run aground, by which means they loſt all their proviſions and booty, excepting their fire arms, with which they made the beſt of their way home, having 75 miles to meaſure back, without any proviſions but what they could catch by the way. They travelled until Monday, when they killed a raccoon, and on Tueſday found the carcaſe of a dear, lately kill'd; with which refreſhments they reached the ſettlements on Thurſday. At their unexpected return, with the account of their brilliant exploits, as we may well judge, they were heartily congratulated.

Having ſaid thus much of the ten ſavages, I proceed to a tale of the ſix. Theſe made their appearance on Monday the 27th of March, near a place called Kingſton, within the limits of Weſtmoreland, where they ſoon kidnapped Thomas Bennit, with his ſon, 12 years old, and a Mr. Hammond, and without delay, ſet out for Niagara. The treatment they received from the ſavages, was rough and menacing, eſpecially Bennet, with whom they had long been acquainted, and at whoſe houſe they had been entertained: ſuch is the perfidious nature of theſe wretches, like the immortal Arnold, and his brethren, that hoſtilities, and inhumanity exerciſed on an old acquaintance, eſpecially a friendly one, but ſerves more highly to ſeaſon their taſte for inhumanity and ſavage triumph. In ſhort, as to ſituation and proſpects, theſe people were ſimilar to thoſe who were priſoners to the other party of indians, which I need not repeat; they were reduced to the ſame deſperate alternative, which naturally in theſe brave men, produced a ſimular reſolution. On Tueſday they agreed to attack the ſix indians the enſuing night,

with

with the inequality of two to ſix, they placing no dependence on the boy. They were to endeavour, in couching down at night, to place themſelves as favourably as they could, and to take the beſt obſervation, as to where the indians placed their weapons, when they went to ſleep, and by all means, each was to poſſeſs himſelf of a tomahawk, and watching each the other's motion, Bennit was to give the ſignal, when both were to ariſe in an inſtant, and addreſs themſelves to the indians with their tomahawks, in the true ſavage taſte. They had the addreſs to prepare, and provide themſelves as was propoſed, and juſt as they were about to fix their choice on a fatal moment, to ariſe in the deſperate attempt, it ſo happened that one of the indians began to ſtir, and liſt up his head, and preſently raiſed up his body, and ſat by the fire ſide, putting the fuel in order: Bennit determining ſtill to purſue the plan, and not let it die thus in embryo, began to ſtretch himſelf as if juſt awaked from ſleep, and entered into ſome ſmall converſation with the indian, in order to amuſe him; he preſently aroſe, and ſtood on his feet, turning himſelf by the fire, and watching a favourable moment to put into execution the daring plan, which greatly ſwell'd and heaved in their anxious boſoms. Hammond lay as if aſleep, tho' ready, and waiting the ſignal to ſpring and ſecond the blow of his fellow. Bennit began leiſurely to renew his requeſt for liberty to return home, promiſing, that if he might go home, he would ſupply them in a friendly manner with proviſions, whenever they ſhould apply; at this the indian turned up his face, pointing upward with his finger, and in token of contempt, cries out with indian accent, pee; at this inſtant, Bennit took his tomahawk, and with a violent blow buried it in the brains of the indian; Hammond ſprang at the ſame time, and with a lucky blow killed another; the other four indians immediately aroſe, and turn'd to run, when Hammond, by a ſecond blow, wounded a third deeply between his ſhoulders; Bennit's weapon was ſo faſtened in the indian's ſkull, that he could not extract it for a ſecond blow, but catched up a long indian ſpear which was at hand, and before they were out of reach, he puſhed it quite through the trunk of a fourth indian's body, who ran off with the ſame in his body, as did likewiſe he that received a wound from Hammond, with the two ſound indians, never preſuming to contend; though had they dared to face the aſſailants, and put

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the matter to the iſſue of bodily ſtrength, they might have had more than an equal chance; but properties of ſuch oppoſite natures as bravery and cruelty, cannot exiſt in the ſame breaſt. Our people from being priſoners to ſavages, ſuddenly became priſoners of rapture and amazement, at ſuch an extraordinary deliverance, and victory. They ſecured the arms, and without delay returned home to their applauding friends. It appears by ſome after diſcoveries, that the indians ſkulked about in the dark, until they perceived that our people had left the ground, when they came to the place, and picked up ſome proviſions and cloathing, hid their dead between ſome logs, in which point the indians are very aſſiduous, and marched for Niagara. The two ſavages who eſcaped unhurt at this time, were all that reached Niagara, out of 16, to report the ſorrowful fate to their ſhameleſs employers.

To this narrative, it may not be wholly impertinent to ſubjoin a few hints concerning the religion, government, cuſtoms and manners of the aborigines of this country.

As to religion, theſe aborigines, though they are perhaps the moſt rude and illiterate of all the humane race, yet the principles of natural religion are not wholly extinguiſhed in them; and indeed, tho' ſome authors have amuſed the world with tales of whole nations of atheiſts, more abſurd to a man of thought, than the idea of nations of ideots and pigmies; yet I appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, whether the grand leading ideas of an all-wiſe, all-ruling Being, the deathleſs nature of mind, and a future reckoning, would not naturally ariſe in the mind of every thinking man, with an irreſiſtable concluſion, tho' he were diveſted of all the partialities of education. Theſe animals, though they trample on the rights of humanity, and the dictates of nature, yet ſeem to have ſome confuſed ideas of theſe leading points, as I have been informed. They addreſs the Supreme Being under the title of the Great Man, and frequently pronounce mandates, preſages and oracles, which they pretend to receive from him, on many occaſions, and more eſpecially at their powows, a kind of beaſtly maſquerade or frolic. There is a notion prevails among them, that when one is ſlain in battle, if the enemy get his body, he will fare worſe for it after his deceaſe, and for this reaſon they will hazard their lives more to bring off the bodies of the ſlain, than in almoſt

any

any other attempt. A notable inſtance of this kind, we had a few years paſt, in an action at Weſtmoreland: it is aſſerted, by all converſant among the indians, that at their funerals they practice burying bottles of rum, tomahawks, and ſuch things as the deceaſed were moſt fond of, with them in their graves. Such rude cuſtoms, conſonant to the ignorance of ſavages, diſcovers an aſſent to thoſe natural principles of religion. Thoſe who believe there is a God, and after a natural death, that they ſhall ſurvive in his preſence and dominion, cannot ſuppreſs the idea of retribution. It is ſaid that among theſe ſavages, when one commits any abominable crimes, which are ſhocking in their view, they treat him with abhorrence, and ſuppoſe that the vengeance of heaven will ſurely overtake him.

Theſe people are as wholly deſtitute of any kind of government, as any of the human ſpecies can be. There is no kind of animals which herd together, but have ſome kind of government: among cattle, rank is determined by bodily ſtrength and activity; each one knows his ſuperiors and inferiors, and when a ſtranger is added to the flock, the firſt buſineſs is to determine his rank, which is ordinarily done without much ſtrife: this ſalutary regulation, ſuited to their natures produces general tranquility. Geeſe that paſs and repaſs our country, ſpring and autumn, for change of climate, flying in regular wedges, with a certain ore at head to direct their way, have a kind of inſtinctive policy in aſſigning the time and place of rendezvous, and appointing an expert leader: ſo theſe ſavages, when they hear the din of war, if there are white people inhumane enough to encourage them to ſkulk, ſurprize, kill and captivate the unwary or defenceleſs, which are their only exploits, they repair to their ſtandard, and appoint or acknowledge certain leaders, whom they obey only in proportion to their natural talents, to awe, influence and command them: theſe are what they commonly ſtile head warriors; beſides which, eſpecially in times of peace, there are thoſe whom they ſtile great men; and if one of theſe becomes eminent above the reſt, and ſo continue for a number of years, perhaps he obtains the title of ſachem. Theſe great men are ſuch to whom nature has been ſomewhat more liberal in the beſtowment of ſenſe and ſtability, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves on divers occaſions, or have a commanding addreſs and deportment; by ſuch means they of courſe obtain what I would call a natural authority: this kind of authority obviouſly obtains among all mankind, by an irreſiſtable law of nature: conſpi-

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excellence commands obsequious deference. I am well informed these great men have considerable awe over the rest, who pay a very considerable deference to their opinion and advice when they are under their inspection, and free from strong drink and passions.

But least we should form too respectable an idea of these great men, we may consider that they are drunk as often as they have cider, rum, or other spirits, and are frequently guilty of as gross enormities as the rest. These are the most consistent ideas I can form from the small information I have had, and the few observations I have made concerning rulers and authority among the indians, though I am willing to submit to the opinion of any who may be otherwise and better informed, I think I have represented them with as much dignity in these matters, as the specimens of their government will possibly support. It is universally acknowledged that there is no authority among them that pretends to inflict any kind of punishment on those who commit any kind of crimes: if this be so, it is sufficient to my purpose, and without any comment, proves the essentials of government and authority to be wholly wanting. Murder is no very uncommon crime among them; they frequently gorge their unhallowed passions by mauling and stabbing the object of them to death; and herein the fear of punishment does not much excite the caution of doing it by night, or in a solitary place, but whenever their passions and malice impels; the perpetrator expects perhaps to be called by some an ugly fellow for a while, but is apprehensive of no punishment, unless some relative or friend of the slain has bravery enough to avenge his death. I was some years past at an indian settlement, and saw a recent grave where a murdered indian had a few days before been buried; the murderer was about among the others, and though this was in the chief town of that tribe or nation, yet no other notice was taken of the matter, than that the more steady people viewed the murderer as a wretch, whom the vengeance of heaven would some time overtake. If no avenger arose in that case, as I doubt whether any did, I conclude the odium declined with time, adding one to their numberless stigmas of national guilt. It is common for a relative or friend in such a case, to avenge the murder, and sometimes the avenger meets the vengeance of a third, and so on until several fall. I submit to common sense the idea of a sovereign or sachem presiding over such a tribe.

These

Theft and robbery among them are venial crimes, which renders their ſmall property very precarious, and diſcourages the acquiſition of more, were they diſpoſed to it.

As to marriage, it is attended with ſome ſmall ceremony among them; but an indian whenever he pleaſes, turns off one wife and takes another: it is a little extraordinary for a man and woman to live together during life. It is ſaid that if their wives happen to be too familiar with another indian, the huſband is apt enough to reſent it, but not ſo if with a white debauchee.

There is in the vicinity of ſome, if not all indian towns, a houſe conſtructed, called the woman houſe, to which their women periodically reſort; to this the males never preſume to approach, but if their buſineſs calls them that way, they ſhun it by a circuitous walk; if the males have occaſion to carry them any neceſſaries, they leave the ſame at a certain diſtance, where, when they are gone, the women go and fetch it; this cuſtom reſembles one obſerved by the ancient Jews. The manner of burying their dead, is to ſeat the body on the ſurface of the earth, with the trunk erect, and placing in his arms ſuch things as uſed to delight him in his life, and which they ſuppoſe will be uſeful to him in future. they cover him with a pile of earth; theſe piles are ſometimes fitted down by ſome means or other, and leave the bones and funeral treaſure above ground.

The indians are univerſally intemperate in drinking; both males and females never fail of intoxicating themſelves whenever they have the means. They are a moſt lazy, indolent generation, eſpecially the males, who by their greater ſtrength, and total want of delicacy oblige the ſquaws to perform all the moſt laborious and fatiguing employments; theſe, uſe has taught to carry the moſt incredible burthens, when they travel to and fro, and on all occaſions, while the males walk in their company without offering to partake of the burthen.

A gentleman of veracity who had reſided conſiderably among them informed me, that he never obſerved any of the males to attempt any domeſtic labour, but at one particular time, when the ſquaws were much involved in buſineſs, they propoſed an entertainment, and invited the men to aſſemble and hoe a field of corn for them, which they accordingly did, and then partook of the repaſt which the ſquaws had provided, which was a pig cooked with ſome indian corn and beans, the fleſh was carved into as many parts as there were gueſts, of which my informant by ſpecial invitation was one, each was preſented with his ſhare

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of flesh fixed on a sharpened stick, and were told if any chose to refresh themselves with the sauce, and carry the flesh home, they were at liberty so to do; accordingly some eat their allowance on the spot, and others bore theirs home.

The indians by way of ornament, pass a knife quite around the circumference of their ears, separating an annular piece of cartilage, near half an inch in width, which they curiously wind with wampum, but this is presently broken by some accident in their sylvan walks, and the strips are left pendulous. They likewise paint one half of their faces with a deep red, which gives them a very frightful appearance. What little cloathing they wear, is made either of the skins of wild beasts, or some coarse cloth when they can get it. The women wear a kind of petticoat reaching precisely to their knees, and the men something of small width fastened about their loins, and both sexes a blanket, which is their chief garment, thrown over the whole; if they happen to get a linen shirt, it is full mounted with ruffles of the same, seldom fastened at the collar or wristbands, and never put off for washing, until it is worn to rags.

FINI

1789

1695—1704.

1518 — 1520

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Dec. 2003

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